



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP 305723-19

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<b>Development</b>	Retain advertising signage at entrance to shopping centre
<b>Location</b>	Stephens Green Shopping Centre, Stephens Green, Grafton Street, Dublin 2
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Dublin City Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	3660/19
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Irish Life Investment Managers
<b>Type of Application</b>	Retention Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Refuse
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	First Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Irish Life Investment Managers
<b>Observer(s)</b>	None
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2020.
<b>Inspector</b>	Hugh Mannion

## **1.0 Site Location and Description**

- 1.1. The site is the area above the main entrance to Stephens Green Shopping Centre at the intersection of St Stephens Green West, Grafton Street and South King Street, Dublin 2. The shopping centre is a 6 storey over basement building divided into a large number of individual retail uses. The area comprises the retail core of Dublin city and the predominant land use is relatively high-end retail with several financial services and restaurants.

## **2.0 Proposed Development**

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises the retention of an advertising sign (7.8m by 2.2m for an area of 17.16 square metres) which is projected from within the entrance lobby over the entrance lobby at the entrance to Stephens Shopping centre. The sign is a vinyl strip onto which images are projected from two projectors and is fixed on the curved upper glazed window/surface 2.95m above the street at the intersection of Stephens Green West, Grafton Street and South King Street, Dublin 2.

## **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

### **3.1. Decision – Refuse.**

The proposed advertising display because of its nature and scale results in an unacceptable negative impact on the visual amenity of the area and the adjoining the South City Retail Core and the St Stephens Green Conservation Area and would, thereby be contrary to the Development Plan policy and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

#### **3.2.1. Planning Reports**

The planners report recommended refusal as set out in the manager's order.

### 3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

**Drainage Division** reported no comment.

**Transport Infrastructure Ireland** reported no comment.

## 4.0 Planning History

PL29S.246100 The permission was granted on appeal for this sign by the Board for a three year period from May 2016 (expired 2019).

## 5.0 Policy and Context

### 5.1. Development Plan

5.2. The application site is zoned Z5 in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016 – 2020 with the objective “to consolidate and facilitate the development of the central area, and to identify, reinforce, and strengthen and protect its civic design character and dignity.

5.3. Outdoor Advertising SC22: To consider appropriately designed and located advertising structures primarily with reference to the zoning objectives and permitted advertising uses and with secondary consideration of the outdoor advertising strategy. In all such cases, the structures must be of high-quality design and materials, and must not obstruct or endanger road users or pedestrians, nor impede free pedestrian movement and accessibility of the footpath or roadway.

5.4. Appendix 19 sets out detailed policy in relation to outdoor advertising.

5.5. The **Retail Design Manual** accompanies the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DOEGLG 2012) emphasises well-designed and well-used open spaces that contribute to a high quality public realm are a key principle of good retail planning.

## 5.6. **Natural Heritage Designations**

Not relevant

## 5.7. **EIA Screening**

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development the requirement for submission of an EIAR can be excluded at a preliminary stage.

## 6.0 **The Appeal**

### 6.1. **Grounds of Appeal**

- Appendix 19 in the City Development Plan supports advertising in the commercial city centre in a location such as this which is a focal point for pedestrian and a major urban plaza.
- The proposed development is not within the Stephens Green Conservation Area or the Grafton Street and Environs ACA. And these considerations weighted too heavily in the planning authority's decision.
- The proposed development does not negatively impact on the visual amenity of the area.
- The Board's previous decision recognised in part that the site is a 20<sup>th</sup> century building where a more modern type of signage is appropriate

### 6.2. **Planning Authority Response**

- The planners report deals with the points raised in the appeal.

### 6.3. **Observations**

- None

## 6.4. Further Responses

None

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. For the purposes of considering outdoor advertising the City Development Plan recognises 5 zones within the city. The most sensitive of these is the Georgian Core. The application site is located within zone 2 which is described as a “zone of significant urban quality comprising retail and commercial uses. In this zone, outdoor advertisement may be permitted subject to special development management measures”. The criteria for assessing applications for signage are set out in appendix 19 and include;

- The zone where the proposed development is located,
- The rationale for the proposed signs,
- The concentration of other advertising in the area,
- The design and quality of materials of the structure,
- The scale of the structure relative to the buildings and streets in the area.
- The character of the street and amenity of adjoining property.

7.2. The appeal makes the point that the site is not located within the Grafton Street Conservation Area it close to and visible from the southern end of Grafton Street and along St Stephens Green. Despite pressures especially from out-of-town retail locations Grafton Street has maintained its significance in the retail offer hierarchy in the city and wider region. This is at least in part due to the policies adopted by the City Council to maintaining the balance of uses on the street in favour of retail and controlling the materials, size and quality of advertising on the street.

7.3. The shopping centre and therefore the proposed signage dominate the public open space at the southern end of Grafton Street at Stephens Green and it is significant that the Retail Design Manual comments that ‘well-designed and well-used open spaces contribute to a high quality public realm in the location’ are a key principle of good retail planning.

- 7.4. The appeal is correct to state that that the site is strictly not on Grafton Street and that the shopping centre dates from the 1980's and therefore there is some scope for more modernist advertising structures. Nonetheless Stephens Green Shopping Centre is a very significant visual marker in the complex of streets in the area and from Stephens Green itself. The nature of the signage is significant since its intention is to vary the images or text quickly over time with images or text being projected from inside the building to be seen from the public realm.
- 7.5. The scale of the structure relative to the building is also significant. While the building is large its façade is broken up and the more open aspect of the space onto which it faces allows for a larger form. However, the signage will comprise an incongruous 'block' within the façade and be visually disruptive when viewed from the public realm.

## 8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1. I recommend that permission be refused.

## 9.0 Reasons and Consideration

1.	The proposed development is located in an area of significant urban design quality zoned 2 for the purposes of assessing advertising structures in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022. The proposed development, by reason of its scale, design and location at a significant junction of Grafton Street and St Stephens Green would seriously detract from the urban design quality of the area, would seriously injure the visual amenity of the area and would, therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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Hugh Mannion  
Senior Planning Inspector

20<sup>th</sup> January 2020.